

Norwich Human Services Testimony
March 23, 2016 Judiciary Hearing on
**S.B. No. 473 An Act Concerning a Petition for release from the requirement to
register as a sexual offender for life**
**H.B. No. 5529 An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registrations Laws, Residency
Restrictions for Registered Sexual Offenders:**

My name is Lee-Ann Gomes and I am the Director at Norwich Human Services. I have worked in Norwich at this agency for over 30 years and most recently have been appointed to the subcommittee on sex offender sentencing, by my state Representative, Emmett Riley.

Norwich has an extremely large population of sex offenders. It has been said that, per capita, we have one of the highest rates in the county with approximately 98 offenders on the registry in a city with a population of 40,000.

We commend the Judiciary Committee on the great amount of attention they have spent re-thinking CT's registry. We applaud the suggestion to make the registry a tree-tiered system in accordance with the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. However, we oppose HB 5529. We do so as having an offense based registry, without regard to assessing the risk of the offender, increases the size of the registry needless and forces police, probation and human service staff to over focus time and resources on people who are not likely to re-offend.

Placing people on a public registry is a big deal. It hems the person up for 10 years or for their life and stymies efforts to seek employment, housing, shelters and some types of treatment. Please do not see this as sympathizing with people who have committed crimes for which they need to accept the legal consequences. However, placing someone on a public registry often continues to make him or her pay for his or her crime.

We have experience with cases where modifications in the registry would not pose a risk to society. For example, a 19 year old who had sex with a 16 year old, who later marries that woman, and has two children with her, is still on the sex offender registry at age 25 while his wife is 23 based on his offense, not on the risk of him assaulting anyone in the community. Or the disabled, frail elderly who is released from jail and needs convalescent care who is barred from nursing homes, despite being immobile.

The registry needs to make sense. The registry should be a place where people about whom the community should be concerned are recorded. It should not indiscriminately place all people who have committed certain offenses on a list which signals to the public to be fearful of them for an indefinite amount of time.

We do support **S.B. No. 473 An Act Concerning a Petition for release from the requirement to register as a sexual offender for life**, for the reasons stated above. People who do not or no longer pose a threat to society should have a reasonable chance of being removed from the public registry providing certain conditions are met.

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